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ABRIDGEMENT.

PRINCIPLES
OF
GOVERNMENT,
ADAPTED TO
GENERAL INSTRUCTION AND USE.

BY THE
Rev. R. NARES, A.M.
AUTHOR OF A TRACT, ENTITLED
PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT, DEDUCED FROM
REASON, &c.

From which this is abridged.

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION.

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THIS DAY IS PUBLISHED,
PRICE TWO SHILLINGS AND SIX-PENCE,

Consisting of 160 Pages,

PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT,

DEDUCED FROM

REASON,

SUPPORTED BY

ENGLISH EXPERIENCE,

AND OPPOSED TO

FRENCH ERRORS.

By the Rev. R. NARES, A.M.

LONDON: PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.

INTRODUCTION.

IN order to obtain a true and sound knowledge of any art, it is necessary to know its principles, or first general rules: if these be rightly learnt, a man of common understanding may easily go on to gain the rest: but if in this part there be any mistake, many others must arise from it. Even in the mechanic arts this assertion is true. Every day we may hear it said, by some artist or other, that a man who does not know such and such rules or maxims, will never be a good shoe-maker, taylor, cabinet-maker, or whatever else may be his way of life. These rules and maxims are what we call PRINCIPLES, and to know them is as necessary, as it is to be informed in what direction a place lies to which we mean to walk: in which respect, if we are uninformed, or, what is worse, misinformed, we shall be sure to wander from our way, to our great fatigue, disappointment, and, perhaps, loss.

Government, therefore, like other branches of knowledge, has its general principles. Nor, as happens in the other cases, will any men be able to contrive a good government, unless they understand those general rules and maxims. In England
the

the principles of government have long been better understood, by those who had leisure for the study of them, than in any other country, and we have consequently enjoyed a better government. The wisdom of our law-makers, and, in time, the soundness of public opinion, which had happily received a right direction, from long experience, and many trials towards improvement, formed for us such a constitution, as not only we ourselves have gloried in, finding that it made us happy, but foreigners have also yet more strongly commended, as well contrived to answer every end of public good. By long acquaintance with so excellent a constitution, and frequent consideration of the rights it gives us, and the benefits we are entitled at all times to expect from it, Englishmen in general have been so far sound politicians, that in almost every struggle of opinions, the great and constitutional principles of government have finally prevailed; and the voice of the nation has at various times supported the rights of parliament, the rights of the people, or the prerogatives of the crown, with equal zeal and eagerness, when either of them seemed to be improperly attacked: because in this country is generally known the principle or maxim, that the perfection of government, and consequently the happiness of the people, depends no less on the due strength of the chief magistrates, than on the the wise distribution of general liberty. This is a degree of knowledge not usual in free countries, where the common fault is to weaken the ruling power so much, that it cannot be of any use.

The rules of conduct depending upon such principles have been long established in most Englishmen by communication with each other, or handed down from father to son, so that in most cases they have been generally prepared to act according to the interests of their country; they knew, at least, what

was constitutional, if they did not know exactly why it ought to be so.

With this degree of knowledge and experience, the country went on very well, and might have gone on well for ever, hadwe been permitted to think and reason for ourselves without interruption. Our government rendered us secure and happy; and, knowing this, we loved it, were resolved by all means to preserve it, and well knew what means were the best. But of late years certain ill-designing men have endeavoured, by teaching false principles of government, to poison our happiness; to make us discontented with our constitution, and to send us hunting after liberty of a better kind, as they pretend, than our own.---They would have us copy the ideas of Frenchmen, who six years ago had not presumed to use the name of Liberty, and who, in their wild way of seeking it, have every year gone deeper into cruelty and wretchedness. As if that giddy nation could, in so short a time, discover more than all the sound good sense of Britons, assisted by experience, could find out in many ages.

At such a time, when much diligence was used to corrupt the people, and to make them discontented, it became necessary to oppose truth to falsehood: and as the deceivers, by circulating false principles, endeavoured to make them dissatisfied with their constitution, it was, on the other hand, required that those *true principles of government*, on which that constitution rests, should be brought forward into notice, and collected for convenient use; in order to maintain that love it has so long enjoyed, and so extremely well deserved.

The foundation on which all that you find in the following pages stands, is the plainest in the world. The enemies of our constitution, that is, of our happiness, pretend that *power gives right*, or that *power and right* are the same things.---

They

They tell you that, because a great number of men are stronger than a few, the will of the many should be a law to the few. We, on the other hand, maintain, that strength and number give no right at all; and that if a great number of men force a few to do what is wrong, they use those few very ill and very tyrannically. We insist upon it, that as the soul governs the body, so understanding and reason should govern force: and that the only way to have things well conducted, is to get all the wisdom you have, to manage all the strength you have. We say, as common sense informs us, and experience shows, that strength without wisdom destroys itself by its folly, or others by its wickedness; and that, therefore, the surest way to make people happy, is to persuade them not to attempt to regulate what they cannot possibly understand. A being as powerful (if that could be) as God himself, if he were not also as wise, would destroy worlds as fast as he could make them, for want of knowing how to manage them.

On the ground of these maxims it is, that in the following sheets I have endeavoured to persuade the body of the people not to seek for greater influence in the government, than they have at present by the constitution. They have now as much as effectually preserves them from all danger or possibility of being oppressed; any power they could obtain beyond that, would only be the power of doing mischief, and making themselves miserable.

It will be observed also, from what is said in the following pages, that the notion of a *reform in parliament*, which a few people strongly urge, under the supposition of a right possessed by every man of being represented, is perfectly false. Representation being not a matter of right, but a contrivance of political wisdom to obtain the ablest persons to manage the

the public counfels, and to prevent the people from being oppressed; which good ends being fully answered by the present mode of representation, it would be very dangerous, under pretence of a *reform*, which would in truth be a *corruption of parliament*, to throw more power into that part of the nation, which may easily have power enough to ruin every thing, without having wisdom enough to remedy the mischiefs it might cause.

1st MARCH, 1793.

the public councils, and a great many people from being
oppressed; which great ends being fully answered by the
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new religion, to throw more power into the
hands, which may cause more power to turn every
thing, without having wisdom enough to remedy the
evils.

18th March 1794

PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT.

CHAP. I.

GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL.

WISDOM and *goodness* are the only true foundations of good government. The perfection of it is seen in the government of God, who is infinitely wise and good. He is indeed also infinitely powerful; but an infinite power, not directed by wisdom or goodness, might produce infinite evil; for folly and wickedness are in their own nature hurtful, and ought to be governed, to prevent the mischief they may do. Indeed, it is only because men are liable to be foolish or wicked, that there is any occasion for government among them. Any number of men, who were very wise and good, might live together without laws to prevent them from doing wrong, for they would have no inclination to do it.

The design of all human government is to produce the happiness of men in society, which of course will best be done by obtaining all possible assistance from wisdom and goodness, and keeping folly and wickedness, as much as possible, in subjection. On account of the bad passions and other imperfections of men, the want of all government, which is called *anarchy*, is the greatest evil upon earth; and government, being so absolutely necessary to make men good and happy, is justly considered as the appointment of God, and is most strongly supported by the words of Holy Scripture. Who

then can doubt, but that to endeavour to destroy a government, is one of the greatest crimes that can be committed against men, and one of the most hateful in the sight of God?

The intention of government being to produce the general good of men in society, the best proof of excellence in any government is the prosperity and happiness of the people who live under it; and when amendments or alterations in a government are desired, the degree of possible advantage must be carefully weighed against the degree of probable danger in the change.

CHAP. II.

R I G H T S.

THAT which some have very boldly asserted, *That every man has naturally a right to govern himself, or to be governed by his own consent*, is false. What is a *right*, but that which it is right for a man to do? and how then can a man claim a right to do what he knows nothing about? How can it be right for him to attempt it?—Foolish men are by nature unfit to govern; wicked men have made themselves unfit, by their wickedness; ignorant men are foolish as to the things they are ignorant of; and one or other of these descriptions will include the greater part of mankind, who, therefore, have no such right as is claimed so boldly for them.

But though men are themselves imperfect, the wisest and best among them may contrive a form of government full of *wisdom* and *goodness*, which it will be *right* for them and all the rest to obey. It has been said that great numbers have a natural *right* to govern smaller numbers. They have, indeed, a natural *power* to govern them; but that power can give them no right to do wrong, which of course, if they might

do as they pleased, they would sometimes wish. A single man, who desires to do well, has a right, if he could but enforce it, to controul any multitude that wished to do ill.

Power and *right* are too commonly confounded in these questions. Numbers have the *power* to prevail in all things, but not the *right*: as a man who has the power to kill another, has not therefore a *right* to do it. Numbers may act wickedly as much as a single man; they may as much deserve punishment, and, sooner or later, will as surely have it. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil," said God expressly to his own people; (Exodus xxiii. 2.)---Therefore the very worst members of society are they who tell the multitudes of the *powers* they have, without reminding them of their *duties*; or, what is worse, persuade them that their *powers* are *rights*, and set aside all duties. The great difficulty of establishing and preserving a government consists in making those who are not fit to govern, understand the duty of obeying.

The real *Rights of Man* are these: The enjoyment of life, liberty, property, and all that innocently contributes to his comfort or security. To these rights all men have an *equal* claim. A good government will preserve them equally to all ranks of people; and this is the only *equality* that men have any right to seek.

CHAP. III.

LIBERTY.

COMPLETE liberty belongs only to God, because he alone can do whatever he will. Other beings are confined in various ways. Some things by nature they cannot do; others are forbidden by morality and religion: and since a certain
punish-

punishment attends evil-doing, to be prevented from acting wickedly, or even foolishly, is a great advantage.

True liberty consists only in the power of acting wisely and virtuously ; or, in matters indifferent as to good or evil, according to inclination. To have less freedom than this, is to be oppressed ; to have more, is to be too free, and is more likely to produce misery than happiness.

In whatever country a man may do freely whatever is pleasing or advantageous to himself, and not injurious to others, liberty is sufficiently established.

CHAP. IV.

L A W.

FIXED rules to establish the advantages of *wisdom* and *goodness* in the management of a state, are called *Laws*.* They are almost equally necessary to direct those who govern, and those who are governed.

Divine laws alone can be perfect, and the laws of men must by no means contradict such laws of God as are known. Good laws must be so formed as to promote the general advantage of men in society : they must therefore be *equal* ; that is, they must give to all ranks and classes of men equal protection and security. The same crimes must be punished alike in all.

A system of laws, considered chiefly with respect to its general principles and design, is called a *CONSTITUTION* ;

* It comes to the same thing, stated in this way, as is asserted by an ingenious writer in a late publication, namely, that government was instituted " to compel men to observe the unalterable rules of justice and equity." *Pictet's Letter to a Foreign Nobleman*. Wisdom and goodness will of course establish such laws.

and therefore all countries that have laws must have a constitution, good or bad.

It is very difficult to make laws so wisely that they shall not produce any evils; but in this respect experience teaches much more than any wisdom can discover of itself. Those laws, and that constitution, therefore, which are found by experience to make men secure and happy, may positively be called *good*, and should not rashly be altered: and whoever attempts to make laws, should attend very carefully to the lessons of experience, and be upon his guard against the restless love of change.

CHAP. V.

LEGISLATION OR LAW-MAKING.

AS the laws made by men must occasionally require amendment and alteration, not being perfect in themselves, and being affected by alteration of circumstances, the power of making new laws, or abolishing old ones, must be placed in some hands. It should so be placed as to be exercised with the utmost wisdom and goodness that is possible.

To make wise and good laws is the most difficult thing in the world, and requires much study and knowledge; it should not, therefore, be attempted by ignorant people, nor overruled by them. The numbers, therefore, who have the power to do this by their strength, are bound in duty to give up that power to such as may have better knowledge and more wisdom for performing it.

One thing, however, the body of the people are capable of judging, which is, whether they are oppressed or not. The power of doing this, therefore, may be left in their hands by the contrivance of choosing representatives at regular times.

But

But when they have chosen those representatives, they must not pretend to direct their counsels ; for if they did, what advantage would they have gained by choosing men more wise and learned than themselves ? It would be very strange for those who know least to direct those who know most. If they think the persons they have chosen not their friends, they may, at the first opportunity, choose others.

CHAP. VI.

REPRESENTATION.

REPRESENTATION is a political contrivance, by means of which the body of a people formally give up their *power* of governing by strength of numbers, to those who have the *right* to govern by strength of wisdom ; retaining merely influence enough to prevent themselves from being oppressed : which otherwise might happen, if their law-makers should not be good as well as wise. The power of re-electing or changing these representatives at certain times preserves this influence in their hands.

The number of the electors should be sufficiently great, on the whole, to give a fair declaration of public opinion, if there should at any time be occasion to obtain it. They should be so distributed in every part of the country, that all interests may be furnished with the means of being heard and considered : and they should have some property or regular means of subsistence, that they may have some real interest in public affairs.

CHAP. VII.

LEGISLATIVE BODY, OR LAW-MAKERS.

MEN employed to make laws should be men of fortune, education, abilities, experience, or knowledge ; and common sense and opinion will sufficiently point out such persons.

These men, elected by the people, should propose and regulate taxes, because they are connected with all parts of the nation, and therefore must know how the interests of all parts will be affected by them ; and because their dependence on the people for their re-election will prevent them from laying on the taxes oppressively.

No long time should pass between the meetings of this body. The exact number of its members is not material.

CHAP. VIII.

EXECUTIVE POWER.

GOD alone can give to laws the wonderful perfection of executing themselves, as those of nature do by his appointment. Laws made by men are dead, and must be carried into execution by persons appointed for that purpose.

Laws wisely made for the good of all, should, for the sake of all, be constantly enforced ; and the power appointed to enforce or execute them should, of course, be armed with such authority as may overcome opposition, or overawe it. Were it possible for every person existing in a country actually to give his consent to every law, even this would not give sufficient security for their obeying them ; because men's minds will change, and in some circumstances always do change.

Therefore, lest the part that is to obey should be too strong for that which ought to govern, the law should be armed, and the people not; that is, they who are to execute the law, should have the management of the military force: yet as military force of too great strength is dangerous, and likely to become oppressive, it must be given with careful limitations; and this want of real strength in the executive power can only be made up by the force of public opinion.

The authority of a KING is that kind of authority which most obtains general respect, and is usually best supported by public opinion; because it most resembles all the natural authorities among men, those of father, master, &c.

A monarch, duly limited by law, is less likely to increase his power to a dangerous degree than the legislative assembly, which is supported by the overbearing strength of the people.

Other modes of placing that power from which the execution of the laws is to proceed, are found, upon trial and examination, to be productive of more evils than the authority of a king. An hereditary crown provides best against the turbulence of ambition. The defects that occasionally arise in hereditary authority, from the want of wisdom or goodness in some who inherit, may perfectly be remedied by such regulations in the constitution as necessarily lead the sovereign to employ the best abilities he can find among his subjects; and which provide against the ill conduct of those he thus employs.

The common objections against hereditary power are therefore of no force, where such provisions exist, as they do most fully in the British constitution.

CHAP. IX.

THE KING.

THE KING is the representative of the laws: he is the life of those ordinances which in themselves are dead. His power is the power of putting the laws in force, and of course he cannot transgress them.

Laws being necessary for the welfare of men in society, according to the nature God has given us, are reckoned holy, and, for the same reason, the king also, who represents and enforces them: he, therefore, takes possession of his throne with solemn ceremonies of religion, and is said, in Christian countries, to reign *by the grace of God*.

To give to the king the utmost support of public opinion, and honour, it is wise that the law should make him the fountain of all public honour, and adorn him with all possible splendour: and the same magnificence, which thus gives dignity to his court, is also very beneficial to trade.

The king is subject to the law, only because it is, by supposition, good and wise; not under any notion of a *public will*; for will, public as well as private, is often very wicked or very foolish. Over all but the law he is sovereign. To call him (as the French affected while they allowed a king in their new government) a *public servant*, is not only false, but dangerous; because that expression implies, that he should be subject to those whose first political duty is to obey him, as good and faithful subjects. To appoint a servant to govern is nonsense.

From this superiority of the king, it follows, that he cannot, on any account, be accused at law, tried, confined, condemned, or punished. All these are acts of sovereignty, and he is himself the sovereign. Hence arises the wise maxim of

the English law, that *the king can do no wrong*, meaning only that whatever wrong is imputed to the government must be considered as the act, not of the king, but of his servants and advisers.

The power of calling the ministers of the crown to account, is as complete a security to the people as if the king himself could be made accountable, and is not attended with the same dangers and absurdities.

The king must be at perfect liberty to choose his own servants and ministers, otherwise he would not govern; but they who made that choice would be the real sovereigns.

The power of doing all those things which demand wise and secret counsels, with quick and certain execution, must be left to the king, making his ministers answerable for the use of those powers. All this is necessary for the prosperity of the state, and, with the various restraints provided by such a constitution, not in the least dangerous.

CHAP. X.

BALANCE OF POWERS.

THUS far we have supposed only two authorities to be constituted in our state; that of the legislative assembly of representatives, and that of the king. These, we are certain, from the natural ambition of man, will contend with each other for power, and the struggle will not be an equal or a fair one. The legislative body, supported by the strength of the people, having the power of granting money, and of making laws, will be much too strong for the king, whose power is so limited, and supported rather by public opinion than by real strength.

The king must, therefore, be allowed the proper means of protecting his own authority. His free consent must be made necessary to every new law, lest any should be introduced injurious

jurious to him. He must also have the power of dissolving the legislative body at pleasure, that in any difficult question he may at least be able to learn what is the wish of his people, by the representatives they send back to him.

But, with all these provisions, there will still remain a danger, lest the king should appear too often to stand opposed to the people; whereby the great support of his authority, public opinion, would be endangered, or lost.

CHAP. XI.

ARISTOCRATIC ORDER.

TO prevent those dangerous contests, and the above-mentioned evil consequence of them, an intermediate power must be raised to stand between the king and the representatives of the people, to moderate their struggles, and prevent the incroachments of either.

This service may best be performed by what has lately been called an Aristocratic Order, or Nobility. A set of hereditary nobles, of considerable property, should therefore be formed into another assembly; having the same power of making, altering, repealing, or rejecting laws, as was given to the assembly of representatives.

These men, holding their seats and dignity free from all dependence on the king or people, will be precisely the proper persons to oppose the dangerous designs of both: they will not suffer the crown to become too strong, for fear of being oppressed by it; nor will they suffer the people to gain too great an influence, as that would soon be fatal to their authority.

To this order of subjects, however, no oppressive privileges must be allowed. They must not be at all exempted from punishment for crimes, nor from taxes; nor must they possess any arbitrary authority over others. Titles, dignities, and

outward distinctions may be given to them very safely ; such advantages are injurious to no man, yet form a very strong and innocent object of ambition.

The admission of men approved for wisdom, and eminent for skill in the law, into this assembly, will render it the more respectable, and qualify it to act as a court of final appeals. The additions to this body should be made by the king alone.

CHAP. XII.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

TO have an order of nobility in a state may be considered as almost a political necessity ; for men will always assume a kind of rank or nobility, on some account or other : it has happened in all countries hitherto known, and therefore may be expected in all. It is consequently much wiser to make this natural inclination of men useful to the state, by directing it in the manner above described, than to leave it to the management of chance.

Some exertions are occasionally required for the public good, which, with the hope of a reward so high as permanent nobility, will be made the more readily. There are also some public services which cannot be so worthily rewarded by any other means as by making the person and his family noble. It is the glory of this nation, that some of our highest nobility are descended from men who gained that promotion by the greatest services to their country ; and the preservation of the honours, thus obtained, is to us a sacred trust, the payment of a debt for which we are solemnly pledged, a standing mark of public gratitude, which cannot be removed so long as there is any public virtue.

The picture of a well-constructed society cannot be found in an equality of ranks which is contrary to nature ; that is, to the nature of man, who will always earnestly seek for elevation

vation and distinction. It is seen rather in such a system as gives dignity and honour to those who govern, according to the purposes of government they are appointed to fulfil, and provides, for all the rest of the people, protection and security, without the slightest danger of oppression. Such is the constitution of this happy country ; may it not be injured by rashness or malice !

CHAP. XIII.

RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT.

RELIGION is, by the appointment of Divine Providence, the great support of human law. It regulates the inner man, while the law can only notice his actions.

But religion requires to be protected by the law : for though men are not naturally inclined to be without religion, few will, of their own accord, give such attention to it as is necessary.

The religion established will of course be that which is most generally received in the country. The form of church government will depend on the nature of the religion, and the common maxims of general utility.

Toleration should be general ; but a disposition to overturn the establishment appointed by the law, must be resisted by all prudent means. Attempts of this nature are as much offences against law, as any other transgressions of it, and are as much to be provided against as any other endeavours to disturb the peace, and destroy the settled order of society.

CHAP. XIV.

R E S I S T A N C E.

THE right of resisting, in any case, depends merely on the right of *self-preservation*. But as laws are made for the general good, no single person, or small number of persons, has
a right

a right to make resistance on that plea. The common interest of all, to prevent general oppression or misery, is the only cause that can justify resistance to established power; and this necessity must be entirely clear, and very pressing, before it can be allowed. The reason is, that the universal danger arising from such struggles is too great to be hazarded without the strongest necessity; and it must be the utmost wickedness to throw a whole country into danger without a necessary cause.

If great changes in the laws, at any time, are judged necessary, justice requires that all possessions, subsistence, and honours, fairly obtained under the former laws, should be respected and preserved in the persons of the present possessors, who hold them under the public faith. It can never be just to ruin or degrade men who have committed no crime, merely because it is thought right to change the law; prevent others in future from holding the same things, if it be thought right to do so, but leave the present men unmolested: the public is immortal.

Privileges that are oppressive should indeed be abolished without delay; but without adding any punishment. While they were allowed by law, to use them was innocent.

These **PRINCIPLES** of **GOVERNMENT** being such as, it seems, reason must approve, and the admirable effect of them in practice being known by long experience, under our constitution, which stands upon these grounds: it is hoped that every subject of Great Britain and Ireland will see from hence, how zealous he ought to be to support and defend from all injury a possession so invaluable; and how earnest to deliver to his children, unchanged, that glorious gift which he received from his forefathers; the gift of **LIBERTY, SECURITY, LAW, and RELIGION**, as established by the **CONSTITUTION**.

F I N I S.

